

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested.

Applicants wish to thank Examiners Cajilig and Canfield for the courtesy of an interview on January 14, 2009, at which time the outstanding Office Action was discussed, as were possible claim amendments. Although no agreement was reached at that time, the present response includes further amendments based upon the suggestions made by the Examiners at that time.

Claims 27, 29, and 48-50 have been canceled. Claim 26 has been amended to recite that the fixing system is “adapted to be secured to a panel of fragile material.” Basis for this is believed to be evident in the description of a system for fixing panels of fragile material at lines 14-16 of page 1, coupled with the disclosure that the system is secured to the panel.

Claim 26 has further been amended to recite that the panel comprises two faces and at least one edge surface connecting the faces. Basis for this is evident from the Figures and page 2, lines 12-15.

Claim 26 now further recites that a portion of the panel is interposed between the first and second contact regions. Examples of this are shown in Figure 2 wherein the corner of the panel is interposed between the contact regions 3 and 4, and Figure 3 wherein a portion of the panel is interposed between the aperture 18 and the edge surface against which part 9 bears.

Claim 26 has been yet further amended to recite that the adjusting device is configured to apply a force in a direction parallel to the faces of the panel and along a line connecting the first and second anchoring parts to draw the first and second anchoring parts toward one another (page 2, lines 1-2). An example of this is the adjusting devices 15 and 16 which may comprise a screw-nut system which brings the point fasteners 7-8 closer to each other. It is inherent that the tightening of such a screw-nut system will thereby apply a force

in a direction parallel to the faces of the panel and along a line connecting the anchoring parts.

New Claim 51 corresponds to Claim 26 but incorporates the panel into the claimed combination.

As was discussed during the interview, it is respectfully submitted that the drawing objection and the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first and second paragraphs, have been rendered moot by the amendment to Claim 26 and the cancellation of Claims 29 and 48-50. In particular, the claims no longer refer to the fixing system being provided for fixing the panel to a bearing structure.

Rather, the claimed invention is directed to a fixing system adapted to be secured to a panel of fragile material. The conventional fixing systems for panels of fragile materials conventionally extend perpendicular to the plane of the panel, and produce forces in the direction perpendicular to this plane. The present invention, on the other hand, provides a fixing system wherein the forces produced extend roughly in the plane of the panel (page 2, lines 12-15), so that the additional thickness required for the fixing system is minimal. To this end, it is based on a point fastener having anchoring points configured to engage transverse edge surfaces of the panel having a portion of the panel interposed therebetween, wherein an adjusting device applies a force to draw the first and second anchoring parts toward one another. Therefore, upon the application of the force in a direction parallel to the faces of the panel and along a line connecting the anchoring parts, the anchoring parts will be drawn toward one another and will thereby bear against the interposed portion of the panel.

Claims 26-28, 35, and 36 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as being anticipated by U.S. patent 3,936,968 (Gilbert). However, as was discussed during the interview, Gilbert merely discloses a frame having corner members 3A-3D which are connected by cross braces 11 and 13. While the cross braces connect the corner members, they do not draw the corner

members together or apply a force in a direction parallel to the frame and along a line connecting the corner members. It is therefore respectfully submitted that amended Claim 26 and new Claim 51 clearly define over this reference.

Claims 26 and 29 were also rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as being anticipated by U.S. patent 3,694,984 (Schwartz). However, this reference merely discloses a retaining element 11 which bears transversely against the *face* of a panel and against the face of a frame 2 in order to hold the panel on the frame. No anchoring parts configured to engage an edge portion, or adjusting device configured to apply a force in a direction parallel to the panel faces and along a line connecting first and second anchoring parts, are disclosed in Schwartz and so the claims also define over this reference.

Claims 26-28, 31, 32, 34, 37, and 39-41 were also rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being obvious over U.S. patent 4,475,325 (Veldhoen). However, the connector in Veldhoen, like that of Schwartz, merely bears transversely on the face of a given panel and at a single location. It does not have anchoring parts configured to engage the edge surface or an adjusting device configured to apply a force in a direction parallel to the faces of the panel. The claims therefore also define over Veldhoen.

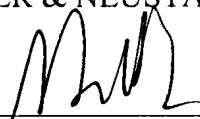
During the interview, the Examiners also pointed to U.S. patent 4,028,832 (Wu) and U.S. patent 4,991,328 (Rousseau et al), which were of record but not previously applied. However, as Applicants there noted, Rousseau et al merely discloses elastic bands and the springs 26 of Wu apply a force transverse to a line connecting the first and second anchoring parts. The claims are therefore also believed to define over this prior art.

Since Claim 26 is believed to be allowable and generic, it is respectfully requested that the withdrawn Claims 30, 33, 38 and 42-47 be included in any patent issuing from the present application.

Applicants therefore believe that the present application is in a condition for allowance and respectfully solicit an early Notice of Allowability.

Respectfully submitted,

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